

## **Republic of South Africa**

### **Zimbabwe Torture Victims Project (ZTVP)**

**Implementing Partner:** Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa)

**Funding Period:** January 2005 – July 2005 (no-cost extension to 30 September 2005)

**Amount:** \$400,000

**Purpose:** To provide services that are accessible, holistic and that ensure the inclusion and participation of victims/survivors in their rehabilitation.

**Objectives:** To assist most vulnerable primary victims/survivors of organised violence and torture in Zimbabwe who have subsequently fled to South Africa with access to:

- Psychological and psychosocial services,
- Medical and psychiatric services,
- Legal and humanitarian services.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- The project has opened files for 95 clients deemed to be primary victims / survivors of organised violence and torture - 71 males and 24 females. The project receives on average 20 new clients per month. Most of our clients are indigent, even though some have professional backgrounds (i.e. teachers, police officers etc).
- In a number of cases, interventions are ongoing incrementally increasing the Project's workload
- 26 clients have been referred for medical treatment – at both public and private health facilities. ZTVP has had some success in securing access to public sector health facilities, although the quality of the treatment is often difficult to assess, and these facilities do not provide the Project with reports. For a number of our clients, their situation is further compounded by HIV/AIDS infection.
- 43 clients have been referred for psychiatric evaluations and treatment – the project has a consulting psychiatrist who visits the project on a weekly (or twice weekly basis)
- 63 clients have been referred for individual psychotherapy / counselling. Clients are referred to professional counsellors based at the Trauma Clinic at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (where ZTVP currently rents offices). In addition, ZTVP refers its clients to alternative healing and empowerment processes run under the auspices of the 'Tree of Life' programme.

- 72 clients have referred for legal assistance. In all these cases, clients have received some assistance to access the political asylum process. To date, the project has managed to assist 4 clients in securing their refugee status. ZTVP has also assisted a number of clients that have been arrested and face deportation by intervening with the appropriate authorities.
- ZTVP has secured accommodation / shelter and provides humanitarian support (i.e. food, blankets, toiletries) for a small number of clients (approximately 20) on a discretionary basis.

Between 2000 and 2005, Zimbabwe has experienced an ongoing and inter-related set of political, economic, social and humanitarian crises. These have been characterized by an array of human rights violations perpetrated primarily by State agencies and their proxies against an array of real or perceived enemies. Tens of thousands of Zimbabweans have been deliberately targeted in a series of systematic and random attacks aimed primarily at activists and the broader support base of the main political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change, as well as other civil society groupings seen as opposed to the ruling ZANU-PF party, and subsequently depicted as ‘enemies of the state’.

The rule of law has been replaced with ‘rule by law’, and an increasingly repressive legislative environment has been compounded by the politicisation of the criminal justice system and security forces, as well as a more general militarization of society. Perpetrators of human rights violations remain insulated from processes of accountability, in a context of *de jure* and *de facto* impunity. Thousands of incidents of organised violence and torture have been recorded by an embattled human rights sector. Thousands more cases have not been captured. Hundreds of perpetrators have been identified. In recent developments, since mid-May 2005 hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans, in primarily urban and peri-urban areas, have been forcibly removed from their homes, in an unprecedented exercise of social engineering orchestrated by the ruling party.

It is estimated that as many as 3 million Zimbabweans have now left the country. Any number between 750,000 and 2,000,000 are believed to be in South Africa. It is unclear how many of these are primary (i.e., direct) victims of organized violence and torture. Access to the asylum process in South Africa remains restrictive. The ZTVP estimates, based upon informal sources in the South African Department of Home Affairs and UNHCR, that approximately 10,000 Zimbabweans are now believed to have secured asylum application permits. To date, less than 60 applicants have been granted asylum. Lack of access to documentation and dire socio-economic circumstances leave many victims of organised violence and torture extremely vulnerable.